

# Washington Healthcare News

wahcnews.com

Articles, Interviews and Statistics for the Healthcare Executive

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 2008

## Proper Website Organization Will Attract New Patients

**By Don Morgan**  
*Director of Marketing*  
*Palazzo Intercreative*



Is your hospital at the top of the list when someone types in a keyword search for a specific condition, doctor, or geographic area? Are you third – or 23rd? Are you there at all? Now more than ever, hospital marketers must ensure that patients can “discover” their hospitals, clinics, and centers of excellence on the Internet.

A critical step is to optimize your website for search. 85% of search engine users click on a website on the first page of search results (and 92% select from the first two pages of search results). If you aren’t listed on the first two pages, your chances of being found are very limited.

### **Pick the right keywords.**

To provide relevant, authoritative search results, search engines deploy “search spiders” – automated entities that scour the Internet, “crawling” websites, ingesting their content and deciding on when and how that content should be provided to searchers. Spiders

look at a huge number of factors, but one of the most important is the use “keywords”.

Keywords are specific words or phrases that describe the purpose and content of your site in a manner that helps ensure your web pages are part of search results for relevant search queries. For example, use of keywords in your page titles is an effective way to signal your relevance to a specific topic. In a grossly simplified sense, search engines will assume that a page containing a keyword or keyphrase in its title will be a relevant search result for that topic.

### **How you treat keywords can influence your search ranking.**

It is not just the presence of keywords but also the location, presentation and frequency of those keywords on a web page that can affect how relevant your site is deemed. Search engines will check to see if specific keywords appear near the top of a web page, such as in the headline or in the first few lines of text. They assume that any page relevant to the topic will mention those words right from the beginning. Search spiders also weigh headlines, subheads and bold text more heavily than other text because they assume that larger and bolder text is more important.

### **Inbound links are a core driver of search rank.**

The number and quality of links to your site from other sites is one of the most important determinants of page popularity. Search algo-

rithms are written to analyze the number and popularity of pages linking to your site to further determine search ranking.

Build legitimate links to your website by including directory listings, blog posts, press releases with a link to your website and social media such as MySpace and Facebook.

### **Optimizing your site is a constantly changing process.**

When optimizing your site you must also consider information architecture, usability and even design. The online environment is competitive, and search engines are constantly evolving in order to return more relevant results. What works well today may not work as well tomorrow.

Your site must constantly evolve as well. You need to have an ongoing SEO strategy to protect and improve your search rank position. The most important thing to remember is that a good optimization strategy can mean the difference between attracting hundreds of new patients and being buried deep, or even hidden, in the search results. How is your website doing at attracting new patients?

*Don Morgan is Director of Marketing for Palazzo Intercreative, a full-service Seattle advertising agency that specializes in health care. All material is protected by copyright, and cannot be reproduced without the written permission of the company. For more information, contact Don via e-mail at don@palazzo.com.*